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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/021,436	12/19/2001	Kazuo Yabe	4105-2	2085

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EXAMINER

GRAHAM, ANDREW R

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2644

DATE MAILED: 03/15/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.		Applicant(s)	
	10/021,436		YABE ET AL.	
	Examiner		Art Unit	
	Andrew Graham		2644	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 23 July 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 19 December 2001 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Art Unit: 2644

DETAILED ACTION

Priority

1. Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

Specification

2. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities:

- on page 2, line 21, it appears that the word "sate" should be "state".
- on page 5, line 17, it appears that the word "valance" should be "balance".

Appropriate correction is required.

3. The title of the invention is not descriptive. A new title is required that is clearly indicative of the invention to which the claims are directed.

Drawings

4. The drawings are objected to because the "Y" and "N" labels are missing from decision block S4 in Figure 4. Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37.CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure

Art Unit: 2644

is being amended. The figure or figure number of an amended drawing should not be labeled as "amended." If a drawing figure is to be canceled, the appropriate figure must be removed from the replacement sheet, and where necessary, the remaining figures must be renumbered and appropriate changes made to the brief description of the several views of the drawings for consistency. Additional replacement sheets may be necessary to show the renumbering of the remaining figures. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1-4, 7, and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the applicant's admitted prior art in view of

Art Unit: 2644

Moyski et al (USPN 5185803). Hereafter, "Moyski et al" will be referred to as "Moyski".

Regarding Claim 1, the applicant's admitted prior art discloses a conventional acoustic apparatus that is known in the art.

Specifically, the applicant's admitted prior art teaches:

An acoustic apparatus ("car mount acoustic apparatus", page 1, lines 14-15) comprising:

one or more front speakers disposed at front side in a space for outputting a first audio signal (page 1, lines 12-13, 19-20, and 32-34);

one or more rear speakers disposed at rear side in the space for outputting a second audio signal (page 1, lines 13-14 and 19-20; page 2, lines 7-9);

a volume control device for controlling main volume levels of the first audio signal and the second audio signal ("main volume controller", page 1, lines 16-18);

a balance control device (circuitry executing "fader function") attenuating one of a first volume level indicating volume level of the first audio signal and a second volume level indicating volume level of the second audio signal and for maintaining or increasing the other one of the first volume level and the second volume level to be at the main volume level (function shown in Figure 6; page 1, lines 24-34; page 2, lines 1-11), and

a control device (page 2, lines 19-20);

Art Unit: 2644

wherein in a state that the balance control device attenuates the one of the first volume level and the second volume level by a predetermined amount from the main volume level ("localized at the front side", page 2, lines 1-4 and 21-23),

when an external audio signal is supplied to the speaker or speakers outputting the audio signal corresponding to the other one of the first volume level and the second volume level which has not been attenuated by the balance control device (in the example, the front speakers; page 1, lines 30-34; page 2, lines 1 and 24-25)

In terms of the control of the rear speaker volume level, the applicant's admitted prior art teaches that the rear speakers are set to the main volume level (page 2, lines 28-31).

The applicant's admitted prior art does not clearly specify:

- that the control device attenuates the main volume level to the one of the first volume level and the second volume level
- the control device maintains the one of the first volume level and the second volume level at the attenuated main volume level

Moyski teaches a communication system for a vehicle, wherein the volume of the audio system is controlled according to auxiliary sound sources. The system of Moyski provides connections for a microphone input, which is one form of external audio source, to be output through one pair of speakers in a front and rear speaker arrangement (col. 2, lines 29-34).

Art Unit: 2644

Specifically regarding Claim 1, Moyski teaches:

that the control device (31) attenuates the main volume level (gain of all audio signals from 30) to the one of the first volume level and the second volume level (decrease or attenuate gain of outputs from audio source block; col. 3, lines 61-65)

the control device (31) maintains the one of the first volume level and the second volume level at the attenuated main volume level (the applicant's admitted prior art discloses the concept of the rear speaker volume being set to main volume level, page 2, lines 28-31; in light of above attenuation taught by Moyski, such setting of the applicant's admitted prior art would be to an attenuated main volume level).

To one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made, it would have been obvious to at least mute the main volume level of the system of the applicant's admitted prior art, as is suggested in the teachings of Moyski. The motivation behind such a modification would have been that such main level muting, as suggested by Moyski, would have affected an overall mute volume level for the front and rear speakers of the system of the applicant's admitted prior art, thereby improving the ability of the passengers in positions closest to the front seat speakers to hear the external sound source. The nature of the teachings of Moyski, the muting of the gain of all channels, particularly suggests at least muting of the main volume level applied to each of the speakers. The proposed modification is also suggested by the concept that, in the applicant's

Art Unit: 2644

admitted prior art, the addition of the second audio source involves the setting the volume level of the rear speakers equal to the main volume level.

Regarding Claim 2, the applicant's admitted prior art particularly teaches:

wherein the other one of the first volume level and the second volume level is attenuated from the main volume level to a minimum level (page 2, lines 15-17; line 106 in Figure 7).

Regarding Claim 3, Moyski teaches:

the minimum level comprises a zero level ("mute"; col. 3, line 63).

Regarding Claim 4, Moyski teaches:

comprising a mute instruction unit for detecting a mute instruction inputted by a user (user inputs indicate active or inactive communication system; col. 4, lines 11-13; active communication system results in mute, col. 3, lines 61-65),

wherein the control device (31) controls the volume control device to attenuate the volume levels of the audio signals when the mute instruction is detected by the mute instruction unit (col. 3, lines 61-65).

Regarding Claim 7, Moyski teaches:

wherein the control device detects a supply of the external audio signal by receiving a signal (user input) indicating the supply of the external audio signal (user input indicates the communication system to be active; col. 4, lines 10-14)

Art Unit: 2644

Regarding Claim 9, the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski teaches:

the control device attenuates the volume levels of the first and the second audio signals (muted; col. 3, line 63) to the volume level of the other one of the front speaker and the rear speaker to which the external audio signal is not supplied (front and rear gain are muted in the system of Moyski, col. 3, lines 61-65; mute or zero gain is one valid signal level for the applicant's admitted prior art fader control, Figure 6, page 2, lines 1-4).

6. Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the applicant's admitted prior art as applied above, and in further view of Nicholson et al (USPN 6330337 B1). Hereafter, "Nicholson et al" will be referred to as "Nicholson".

As detailed above, the applicant's admitted prior art discloses a conventional acoustic apparatus that is known in the art. Moyski teaches a communication system for a vehicle, wherein the volume of the audio system is controlled according to auxiliary sound sources. Specifically relevant to Claim 5, Moyski teaches that user inputs applied to the microcontroller (31) are used to control the audio system (30) settings (col. 3, lines 42-44). Moyski also teaches that, upon the application of a microphone signal to the audio output system, the gain of this system is muted (col. 3, lines 61-65). User input in the system of Moyski indicates in the communication system is active (col. 4, lines 11-13)

Art Unit: 2644

The system of the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski does not clearly specify:

- the volume control device sets the volume levels of the first audio signal and the second audio signal to the volume levels before the external audio signal is supplied, when supply of the external audio signal ends.

Nicholson teaches an automotive entertainment system that involves different modes of operation for the passenger locations and available audio sources.

Specifically regarding Claim 5, Nicholson teaches:

the volume control device sets the volume levels of the first audio signal and the second audio signal to the volume levels before the external audio signal is supplied (settings are stored, col. 5, lines 23-25) when supply of the external audio signal ends (volume settings restored, col. 5, lines 16-19).

To one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made, it would have been obvious to utilize volume storing and restoring means to store and restore the front and back audio volume settings of the system of the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski, as is suggested by the teachings of Nicholson. The motivation behind such a modification would have been that such storing and restoring means would have enabled the volume settings of the speakers of the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski to be re-applied after the changes in the operation mode of the communication system, such as switching from active to inactive. Such

Art Unit: 2644

volume re-application and reverting to inactive mode would have enabled a rear passenger and a driver to enjoy an audio source after communicating with the system of Moyski, as would have been recognized by one of ordinary skill in the art.

7. Claims 6 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski and Nicholson as applied above, and in further view of Ishikawa (JP 04-162900).

As detailed above, the applicant's admitted prior art discloses a conventional acoustic apparatus that is known in the art. Moyski teaches a communication system for a vehicle, wherein the volume of the audio system is controlled according to auxiliary sound sources. Nicholson teaches an automotive entertainment system that involves different modes of operation for the passenger locations and available audio sources.

The system of Nicholson suggests circuitry which is apply to store, access, and re-apply previously determined sound volumes.

However, the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski and Nicholson does not clearly specify:

a storage unit for storing the volume levels of the first audio signal and the second audio signal before the external audio signal is inputted;

a readout unit for reading out the volume levels stored in the storage unit when the supply of the external audio signal ends and

Art Unit: 2644

a changing unit for changing the volume levels of the first audio signal and the

second audio signal to be the volume levels readout by the readout unit.

Ishikawa teaches a balance adjustment device that is able to restore signal volume level to previously determined values. The previously determined values are stored during an intermittent period in which a different audio signal is applied to the speakers.

Specifically regarding Claim 6, Ishikawa teaches:

a storage unit (10) for storing the volume levels of the first audio signal and the second audio signal before the external audio signal is inputted ("data just before the test signal period", Constitution);

a readout unit (10) for reading out the volume levels stored in the storage unit when the supply of the external audio signal ends ("fetches" enabled by signal from 13)

a changing unit (6) for changing the volume levels of the first audio signal and the second audio signal to be the volume levels readout by the readout unit (adjustment is applied after data loaded in 10, Constitution).

To one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made, it would have been obvious to use the particular circuitry disclosed by Ishikawa to implement the mode-based volume controls of the system of the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski and Nicholson. The motivation behind such a modification would have been

Art Unit: 2644

the avoidance of undesirable delay in the re-application of the previous balance settings.

Regarding Claim 8, Ishikawa teaches the direct monitoring of the intermediate signal (function of trailing edge detection circuit (13), Constitution). In the context of the applicant's admitted prior art in view of Moyski and Nicholson, such an intermediate signal equates to monitoring the microphone signal, which reads on "the controls device detects a supply of the external audio signal by monitoring the external audio signal supplied to the speaker. The motivation behind the use of such a monitoring circuit would have been the resulting capability to reload previous volume settings, thereby avoiding undesirable delays in the output of the stereo or radio signal of the combined system.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Andrew Graham whose telephone number is 703-308-6729. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM (EST).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Sinh Tran can be reached on (703)305-4040. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Art Unit: 2644

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

AG

Andrew Graham
Examiner
A.U. 2644

ag
March 5, 2005



SINH TRAN
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER